DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 104 SP 039 155

AUTHOR Tirri, Kirsi; Husu, Jukka
TITLE Uncovering a Relational Epistemology of Ethical Dilemmas in Early Childhood Education.
PUB DATE 2000-04-26
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Collegiality; *Conflict of Interest; *Early Childhood Education; Elementary School Teachers; *Ethics; Foreign Countries; *Moral Values; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Personal Narratives; Preschool Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS *Caring; Finland; *Virtues

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses ethical dilemmas in early childhood education as identified by 26 kindergarten and early elementary school teachers. Ethical dilemmas are investigated in the theoretical framework of virtue epistemology. The method used in the study is a relational reading of teachers' narratives. Interpretive accounts are created to allow room for both care and responsibility voices in teachers' written reports. The moral stances of care and responsibility are identified as basic elements in teachers' professional morality. The empirical findings present conflicts between teachers and parents, collegial conflicts between teachers, and inter-institutional conflicts in the community. Analysis of the data reveals that the ethical dilemmas in early childhood education are very relational and deal with competing interpretations of the best interest of the child. Teachers have taken the moral stance of care by identifying the ethical conflict. However, the responsible professional action has been more difficult for them to accomplish. Most of the time, discussions have not produced the desired results. Ethical dilemmas in teaching invite teachers to consider the moral relevance of each dilemma by taking the perspectives of the involved parties. (Contains 36 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 440 104

UNCOVERING A RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Kirsi Tirri & Jukka Husu
P.O. Box 38
00014 University of Helsinki
Finland

kirsi.tirri@helsinki.fi
jukka.husu@helsinki.fi

A paper presented at the annual meeting of
American Educational Research Association
(AERA)
April 24th-28st 2000
New Orleans, U.S.A.

SP039155

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Husu

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UNCOVERING A RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Kirsi Tirri & Jukka Husu
University of Helsinki
Finland

ABSTRACT This paper discusses ethical dilemmas in early childhood education as identified by kindergarten and elementary school teachers (N=26). Ethical dilemmas are investigated in the theoretical framework of virtue epistemology. The moral stances of care and responsibility are identified as basic elements in teachers' professional morality. The empirical findings present conflicts between teachers and parents, collegial conflicts between teachers, and inter-institutional conflicts in the community. The method used in the study is a relational reading of teachers' narratives. Interpretative accounts are created to give room for both care and responsibility voices in teachers' written reports. The analysis of the data reveals that the ethical dilemmas in early childhood education are very relational and deal with competing interpretations of "the best interest of the child." Teachers have taken the moral stance of care by identifying the ethical conflict. However, the responsible professional action has been more difficult for them to accomplish. Most of the time discussions have not produced the desired results. Ethical conflicts in teaching invite teachers to consider the moral relevance of each dilemma by taking the perspectives of the involved parties.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s the moral base the teaching profession and the ethical dilemmas in teaching were popular themes in educational research (Socket, 1993; Oser, 1994; Colnerud, 1997; Tirri, 1999). The everyday life of teachers involves relations with pupils, parents and colleagues. A school provides an institutional context for teachers' ethical dilemmas and interactive relationships. Previous research on ethical dilemmas in teaching indicates that teachers are not always aware of the moral impact of their actions (Jackson, Boostrom & Hansen, 1993). Furthermore, teachers have reported themselves to be ill-prepared to deal with those ethical dilemmas they have identified in their work (Lyons, 1990; Tirri, 1999). The purpose of this study is to investigate ethical conflicts in early childhood education as experienced by early education teachers. The teachers of the study (N=26) represented kindergarten and elementary school teachers from different public daycare centers and schools. Teachers were asked to write about a

real-life moral dilemma they had experienced in their work and to provide a just solution to it. The main interest of the study was to explore the themes and the main interactive relationships involved in the conflicts.

Morality can be defined as an active process of constructing understandings and meanings relating to social interactions (McCadden, 1998). According to this definition, there is no definite answers to which morality or whose morality we should observe in our everyday interactions. In the context of the school community, the values of teachers, parents and children are in a constant dialogue with each other. In addition to personal values, teachers need to consider the ethical standards of the teaching profession. Professional ethics include reflection on the values and virtues of a teacher. According to empirical studies, teachers cannot separate their own moral character from their professional self. The stance of teachers' moral character functions as a moral approach in teachers' reasoning, guiding their ways of interacting with pupils and giving them hope for the future. The professional approach in teachers' reasoning includes rules and principles guiding their pedagogical practice and decision-making. These rules and principles build the stance of teachers' professional character in their practical knowing (Tirri, Husu & Kansanen, 1999). In this paper, we present teachers' reflections on the everyday ethical dilemmas in their work. Special emphasis is given to the most frequently mentioned virtues or values underlying teachers' ethics. The ethical conflicts experienced by early education teachers are analyzed and compared with earlier studies on ethical dilemmas in teaching (Colnerud, 1997; Tirri, 1999). Concrete examples of these conflicts are reported along with the most successful and unsuccessful resolutions to them.

RESPONSIBILITY AND CARE AS EXPRESSIONS OF VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

According to Korthagen & Kessels (1999), two types of moral knowledge are possible in the practice of teaching. The episteme type of knowledge refers to moral knowledge where a teacher uses general concepts that are applicable to a wide variety of situations to solve a specific moral dilemma. The stance believes that acting ethically means acting in accordance with well-justified ethical principles. The real test of the approach is the way the educator is able to respond to specific real-life ethical problems.

The other type of knowledge is practical and intuitive in nature. It is moral knowledge that is less conscious, very situation-specific and related to the context. Aristotle calls this kind of moral knowledge "phronesis," according to which "Every statement concerning matters of practice ought to be said in outline and not with precision..." because "...statements should be demanded in a way appropriate to the

matter at hand" (Aristotle, 1975, Nic.Eth., Book VI, 1103b-1104a). The stance emphasizes particulars in teaching. In the Aristotelian view, decisions are not based on some general principle and the character of the teacher always affects them (Bricker, 1993). Applying the Aristotelian view to teaching leads us to focus on the specifics of each case instead of on some general principle. This is because, according to Brennan (1977), ethical principles are "open-textured," that is to say, it is impossible to explicate an ethical principle in such a way as to identify all the various kinds of actions that will and will not count as instances of acting on the principle (pp.112-133). Simply knowing the principles does not tell the educator whether his or her interpretation of a problem is desirable or justifiable. As Coombs emphasizes,"[t]he major task in solving the problem is that of determining how the problem should be interpreted; specifically, what concepts and principles it is most appropriate to use in thinking about the problem" (p. 558). Therefore, teachers own descriptions and narratives of their ethical dilemmas are at the heart of their moral judgment (Sherman, 1997; Fallona, 1999).

The Aristotelian view of knowledge broadens our investigation to the *aretaic*, virtue conception for deliberating ethical problems. The stance is concerned with uncovering relevant virtues, sensitivities, and powers of ethical perception. It focuses on understanding the perceptual ability to pick out the ethically important features of a situation. As Coombs (1998) summarizes: "To a considerable extent the quality of moral perception is dependant upon the quality of the moral and other concepts persons use to interpret [their] actions and situations" (p. 568). Ethical qualities of perception are embedded in common, daily practice. As Hansen (1998) has stated: "The moral is in the practice of teaching." Therefore, an important aspect in the virtue approach is engaging educators in a consideration of how the educational context, with its practical features, power issues, and responsibility relations, affects educators' ethical decisions and actions.

Sockett (1993) has tried to construct an epistemology of practice for teaching from a virtue base. By professional virtues, Sockett (1993, p. 62) means the collection of acquired moral qualities that are embedded in the social practice of teaching and that are necessary to teachers' professional tasks. He takes five virtues - honesty, courage, care, fairness, and practical wisdom - as the core of the professional practice that are constitutive of the knowledge base and understanding of teaching. This approach leads us to virtue epistemology.

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, virtue epistemology is an approach in epistemology that applies the resources of virtue theory to problems in the construction of knowledge. If knowledge is regarded as a justified, true belief, virtue epistemology tries to understand the normative properties of beliefs. Virtue epistemology is primarily a thesis about the direction of analysis, according to which

the normative properties of beliefs are to be defined in terms of the normative properties of agents, rather than the other way around. The main problem of virtue epistemology focuses on the question: What kind of agent character is essentially involved in justification of knowledge claims and actions?

Virtues are generally identified as excellencies of character. They presuppose the authority of the person and require an epistemological capacity to use personal values and understandings as the standards to test the claims of knowing (Whitehead 1995). What is known, and how the knowing is justified, both raise epistemological issues that are related to the person of the knower. It is a question of the actor's individual epistemologies. According to Fenstermacher and Sanger (1998),

"...[knowing is not] independent of who and what one is as a person. It is, instead, an organic property of being human, of acting in thoughtful and discerning ways. ... to know is a form of competence, an ability to navigate the puzzlements and predicaments of life with moral and intellectual surefootedness ..."(p. 471).

The stance implies that virtues can be seen as excellencies of character. A virtue is a stable and successful disposition: an innate ability or an acquired habit that allows one to achieve some good. According to Code (1987), this kind of justification is often credited with particular acts because of their sources in virtues. This approach focuses epistemology on persons, their cognitive activities, and their membership in a community. The actors are seen as part of a community, with all the moral and intellectual obligations that this entails. Code (1987) argues that redirecting epistemology in this way gives the notion of epistemic responsibility central importance. The notion of responsibility emphasizes the active nature of the knower, because only an active, creative agent can be regarded as responsible, and as having fulfilled his or her obligations to her/his fellow persons.

Placing emphasis on virtue and responsibility has consequences for both how epistemology should be conducted and the kind of epistemological insights we should cultivate. Code (1987) argues that emphasizing the contextual and social dimensions of knowledge introduces complexity into looking at, but also theorizing[1] about ethical dilemmas. The stance aims to reveal relevant epistemic circumstances (case history, social roles, conflicting obligations etc.) and not just isolated features of those situations. Virtues are broad faculties or abilities related to some particular case or subject matter.

In early education, children's needs for care and love are emphasized. This approach draws upon moral philosophy and feminist theory which centers the moral life on issues of personal character and how individuals regard and treat other individuals.

[1] It is worth noting that the concept of theorizing originally comes from the Greek word *theorein* meaning "to see."

According to Valli (1990, p. 43), it is rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness rather than in deliberative moral reasoning. It emphasizes ethics that enables maintenance of relationships and sustains connection (Gilligan, 1982). According to Noddings (1984), every interaction provides one with an opportunity to enter into a caring relation. In each caring encounter, one can identify a one-caring and a cared-for. She states that the one-caring steps out of one's own personal frame of reference and into the others (p. 24). Teachers who meet their pupils as ones-caring are taking a moral stance that has an effect on their professional ethics. This moral stance can lead to a caring perspective on moral decision-making. In the field of early childhood education, many authors find it impossible to separate education and care (Goldstein, 1998).

Noddings (1984) has been quite critical of moral theories that favor rationality or the use of abstract principles and codes of conduct over personal care and concern. She has emphasized that teachers cannot take over the total care of their pupils; in the formal and institutional context of school, this is impossible. She does not deny (1992) that caring can be reconciled with institutional structures in schools, but only if schools are substantially reshaped. She is troubled by perspectives that look first to institutional positions rather than to individuals for addressing moral needs. The danger here, she states, is that caring as a non-rational quality that occupies fully the time and attention of teachers can gradually be transformed into abstract problem-solving. In a caring relationship, Valli (1990, p. 43) emphasizes, relationships and empathetic understanding are more important than abstract principles.

Teachers' caring relation with their pupils is a specialized form of a caring relation. Rogers & Webb (1991) tried to define the ethics of caring by interviewing teachers concerning their care for their pupils. They find that teachers' care is not just protecting pupils in school, nor it is just a feeling concerning the good of their pupils. It is also a question of teachers' practical actions in teaching situations and requires teachers' thoughtful educational and moral understanding and decision-making. Their findings also indicated that the ethics of care is difficult to define because our knowledge of caring is tacit in its nature. It is implicit in the action of caring (Rogers & Webb, 1991, pp. 174-7).

Clark (1995) has identified fundamental needs of children to which teachers should aim at responding, such as to be loved or to be led. The best interest of a child can be identified as the leading goal of education. However, individual teachers can pick out different morally salient features from an ethical conflict they experience. Teachers may interpret the needs of children in a light different from that of their colleagues or parents. These differences in perceptions often lead to competing moral

judgements; pedagogically, teachers are often called to mediate between these rival interests.

METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

According to Code (1987), only stories that tie the issues together provide an adequate context for epistemic evaluations because the factors that govern such evaluations are so rich and complex. In this chapter, we present a relational method for reading and interpreting written reports of individuals' lived experiences of ethical conflicts and choice. Such a method focuses on the reading process and the creation of an interpretative account of those reports.

Data

The data includes 26 written reports of ethical conflicts experienced by early education teachers. These teachers represented Finnish kindergarten and early elementary school teachers from urban public schools. The data was gathered during an in-service training session on ethical issues in teaching. Teachers were asked to write about a real-life moral dilemma they had experienced in their work and to provide a just solution to it. The request was formulated in the following way: *Describe a situation in your work in early education in which you have had difficulties deciding what would be the right thing to do from an ethical point of view.* In addition, the teachers were provided with some detailed questions about the relationships, context and solution of the dilemma.

Reading Guide

Our method for exploring the written reports of teachers' experiences of conflict and choice is relational. It focuses on the reading process and the creation of an interpretative account of a narrative. According to Bahktin (1981), "individual words and phrases that are used to describe moral thought, feeling, and action are meaningless in and of themselves to explain the particular meaning" (p. 276). Therefore, as Brown *et al.* (1991) interpret, "the living language exists only in a web of interrelationships that allow a narrator's meaning to become clear only if the context, the narrative, is maintained" (p. 27). Thus, it is only by allowing language to exist in narrative relationships that it is possible to interpret and understand another's moral experiences.

The Reading Guide is premised on a distinction between two voices or orientations heard in ethical discourse: a *care* voice and a *responsibility* voice. In these voices we hear concerns about or ideas of human relationships. A care voice describes relationships in terms of connection or disconnection, conflict or co-operation. It

focuses on the complexities of creating and sustaining human connection in the midst of ethically problematic situations. A responsibility voice describes relationships in terms of actions, attitudes, or stances taken in order to solve - or live with - faced ethical dilemmas.

Insofar as we talk about "connection" or "conflict" or examine a person's actions or attitudes with respect to another with whom s/he is in a relationship, we speak of responsibility and care not only as ethical voices, but also as *relational* voices. As Brown *et al.* (1991) emphasize, "actual or potential experiences of vulnerability in relationships are commonly expressed in moral terms" (p. 28).

Interpretative procedures

The Reading Guide aims to provide an approach to interpreting written reports of ethical conflicts and choice in the light of the relational voices of care and responsibility. It allows a reader to track these two voices and to specify the ways in which a person chooses between or lives with them. The first task of the reader is to locate the conflict in a larger text. Then s/he reads the story a total of four different times. Each reading considers the narrative from a different standpoint. It means that in each reading the reader attends to a different aspect of the narrative thought to be relevant in uncovering the relational voices of care and responsibility together with their results.

The first of the four readings is intended to establish the story written by the narrator. The reader aims to understand the story and its context (the who, what, where, when, and why of the story). Such close attention to the text helps the reader to locate the person telling the story, sets the scene, and establishes the flow of events. In our analysis, the first reading produced the types of conflicts and uncovered their relational partners (relationships).

In the second reading, the reader attends to the care voice - the writer's expressed concerns about the experienced source of the ethical problem. In a school context, the caring perspective often means pupils, directly or indirectly. Here the reader attends to the sources of the conflict between the "I" who appears as an actor in the story and "others," often represented as rivals "in the best interest of the pupils." The reading produced the main themes of issues that were cared-for.

The third reading aims to uncover the responsibility voice in teachers' narratives. It is a question of actions and attitudes to work out, or live with, the faced problems. Pedagogically, solutions to them are often found by an interactive consideration of means and ends. In our analysis, the third reading produced the main themes of the actions teachers felt they were obliged to take in given situations.

The fourth reading focuses on the evaluation of the taken actions and their possible results. Solutions to ethical conflicts are only found by doing something, by acting. The elements of a just solution may be interwoven throughout the story, and the evaluation of them requires a fourth relational reading. In our analysis, it produces the main themes of the end results of the analyzed cases.

After each of the four readings, the reader was asked to fill in summary worksheets. For the reader, the worksheets provided a place to document relevant pieces of the text and to make observations and interpretative remarks. The worksheets were intended to emphasize the move from the narrators' written words to a reader's interpretation or summary of them. They require the reader to substantiate her/his interpretation with quotes from the written story itself. As such, the worksheets stand between the written story and the generalized main themes drawn from the particular cases; According to Brown *et al.* (1991), "they provide a trail of evidence from the reader's interpretations of the narrative" (p. 33).

In the final step of the reading process, the reader uses the summary worksheets that aim to capture the details of relationships, care, responsibility, and results in order to summarize the main themes of the narrative. These themes provide a brief interpretation of the writer's representation of their lived moral experience. The themes are presented as a summary interpretation resulting from the four relational and consequential readings.

RESULTS

The conflict between the institutional and the individual

The ethical conflicts in early education were categorized according to the contacts and relations involved in the dilemma. A majority of the conflicts (N=10/26) dealt with relationships between a teacher and parents. Teachers reported situations in which they had to question whether the actions of the parents served the best interest of a child. These dilemmas dealt with the most suitable educational arrangement for the child or some evident problems at home. For example, in one of the cases, the parents advocated the most academically advanced studies for a child who was identified by the teacher as mentally and emotionally disturbed. According to the teacher, this child had serious learning disorders and would not have profited from advanced studies. However, the parents refused to see any disorders in their child, regardless of experts' opinions. In the cases that dealt with problems at home (for example, alcohol), the parents refused to discuss the needs of their child and the possible neglect their behavior could cause to

the child. The following quote from an essay demonstrates a conflict between a teacher and parents:

Written report
"I have a child in my kindergarten group who is retarded in many areas. This is a very difficult thing for his parents to admit. We have tried to discuss this issue with them with a medical doctor but these discussions have not changed their attitude. The child should start a school after a year and a half but I don't think he is mature for it. Every time I talk with his parents I feel I am torturing them with suggestions of speech therapy etc. However, I think I didn't have a choice here. I told the parents that their child needs professional help in order to be ready for the school. The parents were very angry to me and they told me they would transfer their child to another kindergarten. The co-operation with me was finished. I knew I did the right thing because I had the support from my supervisor and colleagues. I had to take the perspective of the child even it did not please his parents. I had to be honest with the parents. Now it is their choice what to do with their child. I could only make them suggestions to help the child to develop."

First reading: Relationships worksheet
Here the conflict seems to be quite clearly defined as helping parents to face the situation of their child who, according to the teacher's view, *"is retarded in many areas."* Professionally, the teacher represents the school institution with its demands and thinks that the child is not ready for them. As citizens, the parents have quite another stance in which they don't want to give up. Conceptually, this has caused a conflict between the school institution and individual parents. Practically, the problem is related to the particular teacher and to this child's parents. It is a question of their relationships in preserving the best interest of the child.

Second reading: Care voice worksheet
Here the issue is that the child *"is retarded in many areas."* The teacher cares for the child's best possible development, and therefore she has been persistent in her efforts to help him. "I" is represented many times and in such tones *as "...every time I talk with his parents, I feel I am torturing them ..."; ..."However, I don't think I have a choice here ..."; "...I knew I did the right thing ..."* Naturally, the parents, in this conflict "the others," also care for their child but they see the situation quite differently: Even if the teacher has discussed the issue with them they *"have not changed their attitude"* and they *"were very angry."* Obviously, both parties interpret different things as being relevant, and this relevance problem has caused the conflict in which different issues are cared-for. According to the teacher, the delayed development of the child is the issue that should be cared-for. However, the parents see the situation as the reverse: it is the teacher's apparently false interpretation of their child that should be cared-for.

Third reading: Responsibility voice worksheet
Due to the conflict, the teacher has *"tried to discuss this issue with them [the parents] and a medical doctor."* The teacher feels this to be her professional responsibility because *"the child should start school in a year and a half but I [the teacher] don't think he is ready for it."* For the discussions, the teacher has also asked the advice of other members of her working community, and they have supported her efforts in this

case. This has encouraged the teacher *"to take the perspective of the child even it did not please his parents."* She felt that it was her responsibility to act according to her professional ethics and *"to be honest with the parents."* After all, the child is theirs and *"it is their choice what to do with their child."* Here the teacher's responsibility was to *"make suggestions to them [the parents] to help the child to develop."*

Fourth reading: Evaluation and results worksheet
From the teacher's point of view, the interactive consideration of the conflict did not bring the desirable results. She stated that *"these discussions have not changed their [the parents] attitude."* The discussions themselves were unpleasant for both parties because, as the teacher reports, *"every time I talk with his parents, I feel I am torturing them."* As a result, the parents were *"very angry with me [teacher], and they told me they would transfer their child to another kindergarten."* It all ended that *"the co-operation with me was finished."* From the teacher's point of view, this did not serve the best interest of the child, but she felt there was nothing more she could do: *"I could only make suggestions to them [the parents] to help the child to develop."* From the parents' point of view, the result seemed more appropriate: They did not have to face the teacher's interpretations of their child which they regarded as being untrue. The relevance problem that arose in the second reading may have caused the end of the co-operation.

The sample reading case represented a conflict between the institutional and the individual. All the rest of the cases were analyzed in the same way as the sample case. In all these cases, the teachers had cared about the well-being of a child in one way or another. They had expressed their care by taking responsible actions. Table 1 provides a summary of the different aspects of care and responsibility teachers had practiced in their attempts to find solutions to the conflicts.

Table 1. The main themes summarized from the institutional-individual conflicts

RELATIONSHIPS	CARING	RESPONSIBILITY	EVALUATION/RESULTS
teacher-parents(s)	delayed development	discussion	end of co-operation
teacher-parent(s)	academic achievement	academic guidance	no improvement
teacher-parent(s)	difficulties at home	discussion	no improvement
teacher-parents(s)	school maturity	consultation	open case
teacher-parent(s)	attention disorder	observation	open case
teacher-parent(s)	communication with parents	discussion	case settled
teacher-parent(s)	communication with parents	discussion	transfer to another kindergarten
teacher-child	disturbing behavior	discussion, behavior control	open case
teacher-parent(s)	custody of a child	discussion	open case
teacher-parent(s)	teacher behavior	confidential discussion	case settled

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As Table 1 demonstrates, most of the conflicts between teachers and parents were not resolved in the positive way. According to our analysis, our reading case, as well as the majority of the cases, showed no improvement after discussions and consultations. Many times the cases remained open and unresolved. Only two of these cases concerning communication with parents were settled with discussion and a written report.

Inter-institutional conflicts

Collegial conflicts

Another category of ethical dilemmas involved conflicts between a teacher and a colleague. These cases (N=8/26) involved situations in which a colleague had behaved in a cruel way towards a child. The cruel behavior had manifested itself in hurtful use of language or purposeful actions to humiliate the child in front of others. Other conflicts with colleagues involved questions of power and hierarchy.

The following quote from an essay demonstrates a typical conflict between a teacher and a colleague:

Written report

"This is a conflict that doesn't seem to find a solution. My colleague uses psychological power on the children. She embarrasses them by asking intimate questions about their family problems -- for example, about their parents' fights. She also manipulates and blackmails the children. I discussed this problem with her, and after that discussion she started to criticize everything I am doing. She has, for example, made complaints about my work to my supervisor and spread gossip about my life to the parents. I told my supervisor my perspective on the story, and she had a discussion with my colleague. We were counselled three times but the councelling did not solve our conflict. I had to transfer to another team in the same kindergarten. My colleague continues her cruel behavior with the children, and the other teachers who work with her are afraid to confront her. They are worried they would lose their job. Maybe I should have asked for more help from the whole community to solve this problem. This problem is not solved; I only made it visible."

Here the conflict deals with the professional morality of a colleague *"my colleague uses psychological power on the children."* The teacher tried to discuss the problem with her colleague without any improvement. On the contrary, the colleague was offended by her comments and started to criticize the teacher in everything she did. Furthermore, the colleague complained about her work to their supervisor to get even with her. As a result, counselling discussions were arranged without any improvement in the basic problem. In this conflict, the teacher had cared about the children by taking the risk and confronting her colleague. This responsible act had not led to any improvements; in

fact, her action forced her to transfer to another team. The teacher evaluated the results in the following way: *"This problem is not solved; I only made it visible."*

This case is very much in accord with earlier research on ethical dilemmas in teaching. According to earlier studies, conflicts involving colleagues are the most difficult ones to solve. Usually, they remain unsolved (Campbell, 1996; Colnerud, 1997; Tirri, 1999). Colnerud identified conflicts between protecting pupils and the social norm of loyalty to colleagues as the most striking ethical conflict in teaching. In her study, norms of collegial loyalty kept teachers from defending pupils against colleagues (Colnerud, 1997, pp. 632-633).

Table 2. The main themes summarized from collegial cases of the inter-institutional conflicts

RELATIONSHIPS	CARING	RESPONSIBILITY	EVALUATION/RESULTS
teacher-pupils	professional morality	consultation	no improvement
teacher-teacher	responsibility at work	consultation	more difficulties
teacher-pupil	teacher behavior	confront the issue	more difficulties
teacher-pupil	teacher behavior	confront the issue	no improvement
teacher-teachers	confidential matters	confront the issue	open case
teacher-teacher	personal problems	consultation	transfer to another kindergarten
teacher-teacher	supervision	consult the third-party	no improvement
teacher-child	teacher behavior	confront the issue	transfer to another school

As Table 2 demonstrates, all the collegial conflicts remained unsolved or a child instead of the adults involved got punished. Sometimes the conflict was so severe that the only solution was a transfer to another school or kindergarten to avoid the colleague. However, teachers had cared about the children by identifying problems in their colleagues' professional morality and behavior. Most of the time, they had practiced their professional responsibility by consulting third parties and discussing these conflicts with their colleagues. However, many times teachers had failed in their responsibilities to act in these complex situations. Avoidance of professional responsibility had caused regret in teachers and sometimes made them transfer to another institution (see Table 2).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Cultural conflicts

Some of the conflicts (N=8/26) concerned dilemmas between a teacher and the whole community. These dilemmas included cases in which the teacher had to stand against the whole school community in order to protect the rights of her/his pupil. These conflicts dealt with the educational arrangements of a pupil. The teacher wanted to keep the pupil in her own classroom and fought against his transfer to a special education class. In this case, the teacher felt that she knew the child best and she needed to fight for his best interest. Other issues dealt with the educational philosophy of the community, which can be very different from the one advocated by a single teacher.

The following quote demonstrates a typical conflict between a teacher and the whole community:

Written report

"I started my new work in the kindergarten. They told me that their philosophy is to be as child-centered as possible. Very soon I noticed that this child-centered approach was a laissez-faire approach to education. Many parents had noticed the same thing, and some of them had complained about it. My colleagues in this kindergarten called their approach a constructive way of learning and accused me being a behaviorist. I started to pay attention to the eating habits of the children, and I demanded some kind of behavior at the lunch table. The children were confused because earlier they had been allowed to do whatever they wished. The conflict I experienced in this situation was related to my own philosophy of education and the ultimate freedom given to the children in this kindergarten. I believe children need some guidelines and rules to learn to be citizens. My problem was whether I should adapt to their freedom or follow my own educational ideas. Many parents supported my ideas of making some rules for the children. The dilemma is still unsolved. The children behave in a different way with different teachers. There are now guidelines that the whole community should follow. I find this situation very difficult. I am trying to start discussions with my colleagues. I think the main issue concerns who is responsible for the children. For me the answer is not to avoid that responsibility."

This case illustrates well a moral dilemma in a community that involves teachers, children and parents. The moral dilemma involves questions about the ethos of the kindergarten: *"They told me that their philosophy is to be as child-centered as possible."* However, the teacher finds the educational philosophy of the kindergarten to be more close to *"laissez-faire approach to education."* There was a lack of discourse about the means and the ends of education. Teachers, parents and children had a different perspective on what is good for the children. The teacher had brought some rules with her to this culture without any guidelines: *"I started to pay attention to the eating habits of the children, and I demanded some kind of behavior at the lunch table"*. Caring for children meant some clear rules and principles for this teacher, and she took responsible action by implementing different practices. However, the case remains open: *"The dilemma is still unsolved. The children behave in a different way*

with different teachers." The evaluation of this case reveals the lack of moral discourse in this community. The teacher who identified this ethical dilemma showed the moral virtue of justice by asking for fairness in the application of rules and norms. In the school community, it is impossible to be a just teacher without any norms and rules. Open discussion is needed to establish some guidelines for organizational morality. In this moral discourse, the questions of children's needs and teachers' virtues should be addressed.

Table 3. The main themes summarized from cultural cases of the inter-institutional conflicts.

RELATIONSHIPS	CARING	RESPONSIBILITY	EVALUATION/RESULTS
teacher(s)-school community	appropriate rules of practice	test different practices	open case
principal-subgroups in kindergarten	pupils' equal opportunities	test different practices	open case
teacher-school community	a particular pupil	consultation	teacher takes the side of a pupil against the community
teacher-school community	a disturbed pupil	consultation	failure, teacher transferred to another school
school's local culture-multicultural pupils	religious beliefs	making compromises	case settled
principal-foreign teaching assistant	authority	discussion	case settled
teacher-pupils	anger in pupils	calming pupils	case settled
teacher-pupils	pupils well-being in conflicts	discussion	case-specific solutions

Other cultural conflicts included ethical dilemmas concerning multicultural children and a foreign teaching assistant. Both these cases were settled by discussing the conflicts and making compromises (see Table 3). In the earlier studies of moral dilemmas with minority groups, compromises have been shown to be the best solutions to these problems (Tirri, 1999). Sometimes teachers cared about particular pupils who had problems with anger and violence. In these cases, teachers had demonstrated their professional responsibility by seeking consultation and providing personal assistance to these pupils. As Table 3 demonstrates, inter-institutional conflicts have many voices, and discussion of different practices is one of the key elements in the search for responsible actions. In open cases, many times the responsibility to continue the dialogue is the only hope for a better future in the community.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As presented, all the dilemmas identified by teachers dealt with human relationships and their different ways of perceiving the best interest of a child. The teachers identified children's needs to be safe, to be led and to be loved as the leading challenges in their work. In many cases, teachers' virtuous response to children's needs manifested itself in their courage and moral strength to take a stand for pupils by making judgments in troubled circumstances about what was to be done and how to accomplish it.

Most of the ethical conflicts called for the teachers to protect their pupils from further harm. The harm included both psychological and physical threats to the children by their parents or by the teachers' colleagues. This led teachers to mediate between conflicting private and public interests, including those pertaining to personal, professional, organizational, and societal values. These competing values brought their own content and meaning to the disputes about "the best interest of a child." This plurality of understandings should not deter teachers from taking responsibility for the influence and direction for this mediation work. It is an integral part of their profession to discern how these competing interests can practically be best served.

This kind of base of the teaching profession raises notions about ethical accountability issues. As our results indicated, at least three problems can be perceived:

• The conflict between private and public interests. As our data indicated, conflicts between teachers and parents are common. When they happen, teachers must act according their professional codes, parents can rely on their personal opinions. As Buchmann (1986) has emphasized, personal reasons (habits, interests, opinions) are relevant in considering the wisdom of actions where the question is what the individual per se wants to accomplish. However, they are not appropriate for considering professional situations where goals and means are a given. Teachers in a professional role are in the latter situation. Therefore, their particular actions and general dispositions should be based on public standards and goals, not solely on personal preferences.

• The problem of teachers' diverse conceptions of morality. As presented, inter-institutional conflicts were often caused by teachers' diverse ethical standards. According to our data and results, they presented many kinds of complexities and verified Gauthier's (1963) remark, according to which, "the sphere of the practical is necessarily the sphere of the uncertain" (p. 1). Ethical reasoning seemed to be linked with the desires, needs, and the aims of the particular teachers. But consequently, attitudes and actions will affect the wants, needs, and the aims of others. The evaluation of ethical conflicts becomes an intersubjective judgement, not a personal affair. This presupposes the notion and practice of extended collegiality (Handal, 1992), according

to which the total work of school is constantly regarded as problematic and is continuously reflected upon by all parties involved.

• The problem of balancing consequences and results against issues that were cared-for and acted on. According to our study, the results in both institutional-individual and inter-institutional conflicts appeared quite unsuccessful. In most of the cases, ethical conflicts were left "open" and the participants of the conflict found "no improvement," or they even faced the "end of co-operation." Why do teachers not manage to solve ethical problems to any greater extent? As our cases presented, these conflicts were embedded in teachers' "daily baggage of teaching," and therefore belong to their professional repertoire of "dilemma managing" (Lampert, 1985) in the teaching profession. In our sample case we mentioned "relevance problem" (Wallace, 1988; Coombs, 1998). According to this stance, a conflict arises when two or more ethical principles apply to a case, but they recommend different ethical judgements or differing courses of action. Is it possible that teachers do not perceive the entire relevance problem of the ethical dilemmas they meet?

In sum, for trusting and workable relationships to exist, it is not enough that educators be understood as being "pro-kids". The parents, pupils, and colleagues must know teachers as people who are caring, responsible, and capable of looking after our children in schools. The ethics of the teaching profession is wide reaching and draws together the complexities investigated in this paper.

References

Aristotle (1975). *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-X. London: Oxford University Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Brennan, J. M. (1977). *The Open Texture of Moral Concepts*. London: MacMillan.

Bricker, D. (1993). Character and moral reasoning: An Aristotelian perspective. In K. Strike & P. Ternasky (Eds.) *Ethics for Professionals in Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Brown, L., Tappan, M., Gilligan, C., Miller, B., & Argyris, D. (1989). Reading for self and moral voice: A method for interpreting narratives of real-life moral conflict and choice. In M. Parker & R. Addison (Eds.), *Entering the Circle: Hermeneutic Investigation in Psychology*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Brown, L.M., Depold, E., Tappan, M., & Gilligan, C. (1991). Reading narratives of conflict and choice for self and moral voices: A relational method. In W.M. Kurtines & J.L. Gewirtz (Eds.), *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development. Volume 2: Research* (pp. 25-61). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Buchmann, M. (1986). Role over person: Morality and authenticity in teaching. *Teachers College Record, 87*(4), 529-543.

Campbell, E. (1996). Ethical implications of collegial loyalty as one view of teacher professionalism. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 2*(2), 191-208.

Clark, C. (1995). *Thoughtful Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Code, L. (1987). *Epistemic Responsibility*. Hanover: University Press of New England & Brown University Press.

Colnerud, G. (1997). Ethical conflicts in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(6), 627-635.

Coombs, J. R. (1998). Educational ethics: are we on the right track? *Educational Theory, 48*(4), 555-569.

Dewey, J (1922). *Human Nature and Conduct*. New York: Henry Holt.

Fallona, C. (1999). Manner in teaching: a study in observing and interpreting teachers' moral virtues. A paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (*AERA*) in Montreal, April 1999.

Fenstermacher, G.D. & Sanger, M. (1998). What is the significance of John Dewey's approach to the problem of the knowledge? *Elementary School Journal, 98*(5), 467-478.

Gauthier, D.P. (1963). *Practical Reasoning: The Structure and Foundations of Prudential and Moral Arguments and their Exemplifications in Discourse*. London: Oxford University Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goldstein, L. (1998). *Teaching with Love*. New York: Peter Lang.

Handal, G. (1992). Collective time - collective practice? *The Curriculum Journal, 2*(3), 317-333.

Hansen,D.T. (1998). The moral is in the practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*(6), 643-655.

Jackson, P.W., Boostrom, R., & Hansen, D. (1993). *The Moral Life of Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kansanen, P., Tirri, K., Meri, M., Krokfors, L., Husu, J., & Jyrhämä, R. (2000). *Teachers' Pedagogical Thinking: Theoretical Landscapes, Practical Challenges*. New York: Peter Lang.

Korthagen, F. & Kessels, J. (1999). Linking theory and practice: changing the pedagogy of teacher education. *Educational Researcher, 28*(4), 4-17.

Lyons, N. (1990). Dilemmas of knowing: ethical and epistemological dimensions of teacher's work and development. *Harvard Educational Review, 60*, 159-181.

McCadden, B. (1998). *It's Hard to be Good*. New York: Peter Lang.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The Challenge to Care in Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Oser, F. (1994). Moral perspectives on teaching. *Review of Research in Education, 20*, (pp. 57-128). Washington, American Educational Research Association.

Sherman, N. (1999). *Making Necessity of Virtue: Aristotle and Kant on virtue*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Sockett, H. (1993). *The Moral Base for Teacher Professionalism*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1999). http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-virtue (11/03/1999).

Tirri, K. (1999). Teachers' perceptions of moral dilemmas at school. *Journal of Moral Education, 28*(1), 31-47.

Tirri, K., Husu, J., & Kansanen, P. (1999). The epistemological stance between the knower and the known. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 15*(8), 911-922.

Valli, L. (1990). Moral approaches to reflective practice. In R.T. Clift, W.R. Houston, & M.C. Pugach Eds.), *Encouraging Reflective Practice in Education* (pp. 39-56). New York: Teachers College Press.

Wallace, J.D. (1988). *Moral Relevance and Moral Conflict*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Whitehead, J. (1995). Practical, theoretical, and epistemological capacities. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 11*(6), 627-634.